

PROGRAMMING FOR THE YOUTH AND COMMUNITY ORCHESTRA:  
BEETHOVEN AND SCHUBERT AS MODELS FOR SELECTION

A CREATIVE PROJECT  
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE  
MASTER OF MUSIC

BY  
MICHAEL LUND ZIEGLER  
MR. DOUGLAS DROSTE - ADVISOR

BALL STATE UNIVERSITY  
MUNCIE, INDIANA

MAY 2016

Among the many challenges facing the orchestral music director, of significant importance is the art of programming. Through this process, the music director must balance a need to create engaging concerts that will attract and affect an audience, with an equal need to engage the members of the orchestra, while offering the musicians a challenge appropriate to their individual and collective level of skill and musical maturity. This process is, in a way, easiest with more skilled orchestras. That is to say, the more talented and mature the orchestra, the more tools at the music director's disposal allowing for a wider array of repertoire from which to choose. The art of programming is, perhaps, more difficult with lesser skilled community and youth orchestras.

As young conductors enter the field, they will likely find themselves at the helm of these lesser skilled groups. While inconsistent grading systems exist for school aged orchestral repertoire, aiding the junior high and high school orchestra conductor in repertoire selection, once one ventures into the world of standard orchestral repertoire, no such breakdown exists. How does the music director of a community or youth orchestra determine if a piece in the standard orchestral repertoire is appropriate for their orchestra? Having rehearsed and performed Beethoven's first symphony with a community based festival orchestra in Green Bay, Wisconsin, and the first movement of Schubert's "Unfinished" symphony with the Ball State University Campus Orchestra, I know these two pieces to be appropriate for such ensembles. Two questions come to mind: what about these pieces, from their compositional structure to their technical challenges, make them appropriate? From commonalities between the two, can there be drawn any generalizations that begin to paint a picture of which musical characteristics of the repertoire are appropriate for ensembles of a similar skill level might be constructed?

## BEETHOVEN

For the summer orchestra in Green Bay, Beethoven's first symphony proved an appropriate challenge. The orchestra, which rehearsed six times before the performance, consisted mainly of high school students and community members—all amateur musicians. The Beethoven symphony was their first venture into major symphonic literature. Rehearsal time was sufficient, the group felt confident leading into the performance, and the concert was successful.

For a full, four-movement symphony, Beethoven 1 is a modest 26 minutes in length, each movement 9, 7, 4, and 6 minutes respectively.<sup>1</sup> The composition calls for two each of flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons, horns, and trumpets, in addition to timpani and a full complement of strings. With only minimal divisi present in the string parts, a smaller string section could be used. The four movements are written in the major keys of C, F, C, and C, respectively. Within the harmonic structure, the major keys of G and Bb and the minor keys of G, E, D and C can be found.<sup>2</sup>

However, Beethoven's Symphony No. 1 does present its share of modest challenges. The slow introduction of the first movement challenges the orchestra to maintain a steady pulse; simple syncopation is present throughout the movement beginning in m. 57; sequenced off-beat entrances beginning in m. 144 require focused subdivision; similar focus is required in the strings in mm. 189-201. The beginning of the second movement requires a strong and confident second violin section. The third movement, written in three but felt and conducted in one, challenges the group to maintain tempo and accurate

---

<sup>1</sup> David Daniels, *Orchestral Music: A Handbook* (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 2005), 48.

<sup>2</sup> Glenn Block, "Symphony No. 1, Op. 21," in *Teaching Music through Performance in Orchestra*, ed. David Littrell et. al. (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2001), 497.

subdivision. Additionally, the trio presents fast scalar passages in both violin parts. Like the third movement, the finale, while written in two, is felt in one beginning with the Allegro molto e vivace in m. 6. Typically performed briskly, the conductor must allow the proficiency of the group to determine the movement's optimal tempo. Additional challenges include rapid scalar passages in the strings beginning off the beat in mm. 38-45 and again in mm. 100-165.

Concerning range in individual parts, Beethoven presents only modest challenges. In the strings, the violins rise to G6, the second violin part peaking at C6. The violas peak at E5, cellos at A4, and basses at G3 (written G4). Only the cellos have a written clef change. Eight bars are scored in tenor clef, but could easily be rewritten in bass clef if needed. To access this range, the violin and viola parts require shifting. Cellos must shift to fifth position. Both violin parts and the viola part contain written double stops.

In the woodwinds, the flutes are written to A6, oboes to D6, clarinet to A5, and bassoon to Ab4. The clarinet parts are written for C clarinet, but Bb clarinet parts are available. The bassoon parts remain in bass clef throughout. In the brass, the horn parts peak at C5 and the trumpets at G5. The horn parts are written for C and F horn, depending on the movement, while the trumpet parts are written for C trumpet. F horn and Bb trumpet parts are available for all movements. No double tonguing or other advanced techniques are required for any wind or brass part. The timpani part requires two drums and contains no mid-movement tuning changes.

### **SCHUBERT**

Like the Beethoven symphony for the summer orchestra in Green Bay, the first movement of Franz Schubert's "Unfinished" symphony provided an appropriate challenge

for the Ball State Campus Orchestra (BSCO). The BSCO rehearsed weekly throughout the course of a semester before presenting its concert; it consists mainly of undergraduate college students majoring in something other than music. Presumably, some members have had private instruction on their instrument in the past, but most come to the orchestra only with high school band and/or orchestra experience.

This movement from Schubert's two-movement symphony is 12 minutes in length and calls for two each of flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons, horns, and trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani, and a full complement of strings.<sup>3</sup> With only minimal divisi present in the string parts, a smaller string section could be used. The movement is in B minor and does not stray far from the key.

As with Beethoven, the Schubert movement presents some items needing attention from conductor and orchestra. The entire movement moving at a modest tempo, keeping the pace consistent is important. The strings bear the bulk of this responsibility, beginning with ostinato-like sixteenth notes in ninth measure. As the movement progresses, like the first movement of the Beethoven symphony, it is easy for the orchestra to slow down. The trombones play a significant melodic role near the climax of the movement: a strong trombone section is key. A syncopated ostinato appears first in m. 42 and reappears throughout the movement. Additionally, though not essential for a satisfying performance, the softer the strings—especially the low strings—can play in the piano and pianissimo sections, the more effective the movement becomes.

The individual parts require a modest use of each instrument's range. The violins must reach Bb6 (second violins peaking at A5), and the violas peak at Eb5. To access this

---

<sup>3</sup> Daniels, 339.

range, the violin and viola parts require shifting. The highest note in the cello part is G#4, and the basses rise to F#3 (written F#4). The cello part contains four bars in tenor clef, which could be easily rewritten in bass clef if necessary. The cello part requires shifting to fifth position, and both violin parts and the viola part have written double stops.

The first flute part requires playing up to A6, the oboe to E6, the clarinet to B5, and the bassoon to Bb4. The clarinet parts are written for A clarinet, though Bb parts are available. There is a brief section of tenor clef writing in the bassoon part. The horns reach A4, trumpets: G#5, and trombones: G4. The horn parts are written for D horn, though F parts are available. The trumpet parts are written for E trumpet, though Bb parts are available. The trombone parts are written in the alto and tenor clefs, though bass clef parts are available. No double tonguing or other advanced techniques are required of any of the woodwind or brass players. The timpani part requires two drums and contains no tuning changes.

### **GENERALIZATIONS**

Both works—Beethoven’s first symphony and the first movement of Schubert’s “Unfinished” symphony—have been successful programming choices with community orchestra level ensembles. In finding similarities in both part-writing and larger performance challenges, a basic idea of what makes an appropriate programming choice for groups of this level begins to take shape. An analysis of the upper range limits for each instrument in the two pieces (as seen in table 1) reveals the following commonalities: moderate-level shifting is required of the upper strings; cellos must shift to fifth position; basses remain within the bass clef staff; flutes stay within the instrument’s first three octaves; oboes play just into their third octave; clarinet writing remains below the

altissimo range (save for one note); bassoons remain below C5; F-horns remain within or below the written staff; Bb-trumpets venture just above their written staff. Appearing in only the Schubert, there is not enough information to draw conclusions about trombone writing.

**Table 1. Upper limits of composed range**

Piece	Vn	Va	Vc	Db	Fl	Ob	Cl(Bb)	Bn	Hn(F)	Tpt(Bb)	Tbn
Beethoven	G6	E5	A4	G3	A6	D6	A5(B5)	Ab4	C5(G5)	G5(A5)	N/A
Schubert	Bb6	Eb5	G#4	F#3	A6	E6	B5(C#6)	Bb4	A4(E5)	G#5(A#5)	G4

Pitches noted in concert pitch. Written pitches parenthetical.

In addition to range limits, a number of other part-specific generalizations can be drawn. The string writing includes a mixed use of divisi and double stops. Where written doubles stops might be too challenging for a section or individual for reasons of shifting or intonation, the part can be played divisi. Neither piece specifies non-divisi at any point. Neither piece requires any advanced technique, including double tonguing, from the woodwinds or brass players. Any written clef changes can be easily re-written, as needed, in an instrument's native clef, and parts are available for standard wind instruments when written for a different transposition (while this allows for ease of access for players lacking called-for instruments or needed transposition skills, resultant key signatures are more challenging). The timpani parts in both works use two drums and do not require mid-movement tuning changes.

Overall similarities in both pieces include the challenge of maintaining steady pulse, especially in slower sections or movements, and the use of basic syncopation. Key structure minimally ventures past keys with more than 2 sharps or flats (Beethoven moves briefly into C minor) and feature minimal chromatic writing. Where length is concerned, while the

Beethoven symphony is 26 minutes overall, no movement of either work is longer than 12 minutes. Lastly, neither piece calls for instrumentation beyond modest wind and standard string sections, with a percussion section limited to timpani.

### **CONCLUSIONS/FUTURE RESEARCH**

Programming remains a tall task for any orchestral music director, especially the music director of a community or youth orchestra. To properly program for his or her orchestra, the music director must match an intimate knowledge of the abilities of his or her orchestra with literature engaging for both players and audience while satisfying the musical thirst of both parties. The limited skill set and/or musical maturity of the community or youth orchestra significantly reduces the tools (repertoire) at the music director's disposal to accomplish such a task.

While no set of criteria or guidelines will perfectly match all orchestras, following the analysis of Beethoven's first symphony and the first movement of Schubert's "Unfinished" symphony, both of which have been successfully programmed with orchestras of a community/youth orchestra level, a picture begins to take shape of what appropriate literature for such ensembles looks like. Appendix A offers the beginning of a set of guidelines for these ensembles. Because it is constructed based on the study of only two pieces of music, these guidelines are a working document, to be sure. Further study is needed to continue to refine the document and make it truly useful on a broad spectrum. To do so, more repertoire known to be appropriate for and successful with youth and community orchestras must be studied in a manner similar to the two works studied here. These additional findings need be used to modify the tool.



Conductors of professional orchestras have a broad and varied range of orchestral repertoire at their fingertips when facing the challenge of programming. Junior high school and high school orchestra directors have graded systems and resources at their disposal (like the *Teaching Music Through Performance in Orchestra* books). The middle area—that of youth and community orchestras—remains without guidelines to aid in the all-important task of programming. While incomplete, it is hoped that the guidelines discovered here might serve as the basis for a broader tool to aid music directors, especially those new to the field, as they program for their youth and community orchestras for seasons to come.

## **Appendix A**

### Characteristics of Orchestral Literature Appropriate for Youth and Community Orchestras

#### General Characteristics

- Length
  - Overall no longer than 30 minutes
  - Individual movements under 15 minutes
- Instrumentation
  - Basic winds with full string complement
- Key
  - Generally within 2 sharps and/or flats
  - Minimal chromaticism
- Performance Challenges
  - Syncopated rhythms
  - Maintaining steady pulse

#### Part-Writing

- Strings
  - Range requires moderate shifting
  - Moderate double stop writing that can be played divisi if needed
  - Minimal clef changes that can be re-written in native clef
  - Basic bow technique
- Winds/Brass
  - Range limits
    - Flutes: first 3 octaves
    - Oboes: beginning of 3<sup>rd</sup> octave
    - Clarinets: below altissimo (written C#6)
    - Bassoons: C5 and below
    - Horn in F: within and below the staff
    - Trumpet in Bb: just above the writing staff
  - No use of double tonguing or other advanced technique

## Bibliography

- Allen, Michael, Louis Bergonzi, Jacquelyn Dillon-Krass, Robert Gillespie, James Kjelland, and Dorothy Straub. *Teaching Music through Performance in Orchestra*. Comp. David Littrell and Laura Reed Racine. Vol. 1. Chicago: GIA Publications, 2001. Print.
- Beethoven, Ludwig van. Symphony No. 1 in C major. 1801. Kassel: Barenreiter, 1997. Print.
- Daniels, David. *Orchestral Music: A Handbook*. Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 2005. Print.
- Schubert, Franz. Symphony in B minor "Unfinished". 1822. Kassel: Barenreiter, 1996. Print.